

COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR ADDRESSING CRIME  
IN INDIANAPOLIS:

**A Report of the Community Crime Prevention Task Force**

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JANUARY 2007

## COMMUNITY CRIME PREVENTION TASK FORCE MEMBERS

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Co-Chairmen include:

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## INTRODUCTION

Throughout 2006, cities across the country have seen a surge in violent crime. From small towns to major metropolitan areas, violent crime has been on the rise. Indianapolis has not been immune to this troubling national trend. At the end of 2006, 153 people have been the victims of homicide – a grim reminder that our community must do all it can to reduce violence.

Understanding, addressing, and ultimately alleviating the causes of crime is a challenging but important responsibility of the leaders and citizens of any community. Responding to this challenge in August 2006, Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson and City-County Council President Monroe Gray called upon the Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee to create the Community Crime Prevention Task Force to complement the targeted, immediate crime prevention actions taken over the summer and fall of 2006. Mayor Peterson stated, “Our community has come together in unprecedented fashion over the last three weeks to address the surge of violence and crime in Indianapolis. The focus of our swift action in these last several days has been on stepped-up law enforcement and enhancements to the criminal justice system. And while these law enforcement and post-arrest initiatives must continue, it is vital that we as a community get at the heart of the issue and address the root causes of crime.” He charged the Task Force to study the root causes of crime and to identify short term strategies to address those causes.

After three months of listening, research, and discussion, the Community Crime Prevention Task Force offers its recommendations about how the Indianapolis community can work together to stem the violence. This report and attached committee reports do not purport to contain an exhaustive study of all the causes of and solutions to crime in Indianapolis. Rather, they reflect the most pressing community concerns as well as those shorter term solutions that the Task Force believes are most able to be implemented within a reasonable amount of time.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Although there is a myriad of core causes for crime that could be discussed and explored, the Task Force's charge was to focus on strategies that would have, primarily, the most immediate impacts. The Task Force highlighted recommendations that fall in the eight (8) following areas:

- **Ex-offenders**
- **Indianapolis Violence Reduction Partnership & Lever Pulling**
- **Health**
- **Families**
- **Neighborhoods**
- **Mentoring**
- **Education/Relationship to School**
- **Youth Engagement/Activities**

Specific recommendations and examples of various existing efforts are contained within the report as well as the attached Committee reports.

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### **Ex-Offenders**

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More than 650,000 individuals – mostly men – are released from penal institutions each year in the United States. At least 4,400 of them will locate in central Indiana. The average recidivism rate for those released from federal penitentiaries is 40 percent; it is 67 percent for those who leave state facilities. And, 75 percent of jail inmates have served prior probation or incarceration sentences. Most incarcerated individuals have very low levels of education and very limited job skills. Approximately 59 percent of inmates in state prisons have a high school diploma or its equivalent, compared with 85 percent of the U.S. adult population. Only about two-thirds of inmates were employed during the month before they were arrested for their first offense. These individuals return to our communities unprepared for their post-release life. They often lack support and are likely to fail to effectively integrate. In fact, most rearrests occur within six months of release. The community must recognize and address the needs of this population if it truly wants to find ways to prevent crime.

#### ***Recommendations***

- **Expand comprehensive re-entry preparation programs**
- **Expand workforce development offerings for ex-offenders and improve their training for and connections with sustainable, legal work**

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### **Indianapolis Violence Reduction Partnership & Lever Pulling**

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The Indianapolis Violence Reduction Partnership (IVRP) involves every local, state, and federal criminal justice agency serving Marion County to employ a problem-solving approach whereby a homicide or serious violence issue is analyzed, strategies to resolve that problem are implemented and their effects evaluated.

#### ***Recommendations:***

- **Support IVRP's plan to host "lever pulling" meetings for active probationers**
- **Expand lever pulling to gang members**

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## Health

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The causal relationship between substance abuse, mental illness and crime are complex but well-known. Violence can occur when multiple, independent risk factors – including substance abuse, mental illness, family composition, and age – intersect. Mental illness and substance abuse are often co-occurring illnesses. When combined with substance abuse, individuals with a mental illness who are not in treatment are at a high risk for becoming dangerous to themselves and others. Improving the availability and quality of substance abuse and mental health treatment represents an important opportunity for intervention and prevention.

### ***Recommendations:***

- **Improve the courts' capacity to manage and direct individuals with substance abuse and mental health issues**
  - Add two case managers – one assigned to the mental health court and one to the substance abuse court, charged with monitoring offenders and expanding the drug diversion program.
  - Add a third court in Marion County to manage and direct individuals with the co-occurring issues of substance abuse and mental health issues. A new case manager would be assigned to this court as well.
  - Add drug diversion program for juveniles that would allow these youth to stay in school and participate in treatment.
- **Expand low-cost programs to provide treatment in neighborhoods where drug behavior exists**
- **Establish an “engagement center” as an alternative to jail for publicly intoxicated individuals**
- **Expand crisis intervention training (CIT) to all officers and establish a specialized CIT Force**

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## Families

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The prevention of child abuse and neglect has both short and long term consequences. The impact on children who have suffered and survived abuse and neglect is devastating. Effects range from minor to severe physical injury, chronic low self-esteem, aggressive behavior, developmental delays and problems with bonding and forming relationships. Even witnessing violence puts children at risk for long-term emotional and behavioral problems – including substance abuse, suicide, running away from home, and poverty. Violence early in life directly affects a child's brain development – survival skills are developed at the expense of learning and other social skills. Indeed, children who are abused and neglected are almost twice as likely to commit a crime as a juvenile. The community must find ways to prevent this violence and stop the cycle of abuse.

### ***Recommendations:***

- **Ensure adequate support for abused and neglected children by expanding services and resources for families already in contact with the criminal justice or child welfare systems as well as those families at-risk of entering those systems**
- **Establish comprehensive, multidimensional programs to support youth “aging out” of foster care**

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## Neighborhoods

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Crimes often take place in neighborhoods where victims of these crimes live with their families and friends. Although crimes occur in specific areas, it requires the commitment and investment of leaders and residents throughout the entire city to fully and meaningfully address these problems.

### *Recommendations:*

- **Continue to conduct and support outreach in neighborhoods**
- **Increase responsiveness of law enforcement to neighborhood residents**
- **Improve policing of public housing units**

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## Mentoring

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Young people need and desire connections with adults who resolve conflicts peacefully. This need and desire was articulated by youth in Marion County during several meetings and public discussions. A recurring theme from these discussions was a desire to have meaningful relationships with adults who are nurturing.

### *Recommendations*

- **Support law enforcement based mentoring**
- **Support coordination of mentoring programs for youth**
- **Connect youth at the Juvenile Detention Center with mentors and mentoring programs that meet the individual child's needs**

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## Education/Relationship to School

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A young person's relationship to school can significantly impact his involvement in crime. Research indicates that early academic failure, weak attachment to school, poor school attendance, and a poor school environment (i.e., one that is characterized by disorder in the school and in classrooms and the availability of drugs, alcohol, and weapons, for instance) are risk factors for violent crime. Addressing these risk factors and improving school environments have both short and long-term positive impacts on crime prevention.

### *Recommendations*

- **Insure that schools are safe places for youth**
- **Encourage and support schools to teach peaceful conflict resolution, violence prevention, anti-bullying and life skills**
- **Support early, on-going assessments and interventions to improve students' reading abilities**
- **Establish alternatives to suspension and expulsion through in-school suspension**

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## Youth Engagement/Activities

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Professionally organized after-school programs, coordinated athletic opportunities, and extracurricular activities can prevent youth crime. An analysis of crime patterns indicates that the four hours immediately after school – and only on school days – are a period of heightened juvenile violent crime. The community must find creative ways to engage youth during these after-school hours.

### *Recommendations*

- **Connect older youth with community centers, multi-service centers, faith-based organizations and nonprofits that offer recreation, tutoring and coaching on life and employment skills**
- **Connect youth with the arts**
- **Adequately market youth programs and activities with impact, influence and effect**
- **Expand employment opportunities for at-risk youth**



## BACKGROUND

In the summer of 2006, Mayor Peterson, Sheriff Anderson, and the Indianapolis Police Department launched a summer crime prevention strategy to combat the increases in crime in Indianapolis that occurred during the first part of the year. The City's summer crime prevention strategy involved aggressively reallocating officers to street patrol, saturating high crime areas with police patrols, increasing curfew and warrant sweeps, physically cleaning up specific neighborhoods in the city that face challenges with crime, focusing code enforcement actions in these targeted neighborhoods in order to crack down on owners of blighted properties, taking actions to close, demolish, and/or demand repair of several motels in the city that had become some of the Indianapolis Police Department's "hot spots" for criminal activity, installing crime cameras in "hot spots" for criminal activity, and renewing "Canine Crimestoppers" to address dog fighting and the other criminal elements – drugs, guns, violence – usually associated with it.

When the community was stunned by a rash of homicides in early August 2006, the Mayor called an emergency meeting of the Criminal Justice Planning Council, a group that includes judges, the prosecutor, the sheriff, public defenders, and others. The Mayor requested and received an immediate halt to early releases from jail. In response, the Marion County Superior Courts also introduced an 18-point plan that resulted in historic court reforms to move cases through the criminal justice process more quickly and to pursue dangerous suspects who fail to appear in court. The Mayor and Council reorganized City budget priorities to fund reforms within the criminal justice system. These reforms include providing night court, additional prosecutors and public defenders, a warrant strike team to apprehend felony defendants who fail to appear in court, funding for the crime lab to eliminate the backlog of firearm/ballistics tests, additional commissioners to the arrestee processing center, and overtime pay for police officers. And, the Mayor and Marion County Sheriff Frank Anderson secured funding to allow the purchase of 200 more jail beds to ease the ongoing problem of overcrowding in the Marion County jail. These are law enforcement strategies.

As part of the recognized need to establish a comprehensive crime prevention strategy, Mayor Peterson and Council President Gray called for the creation of the Community Crime Prevention Task Force (Task Force). "Addressing the circumstances that cause people to commit violent crimes will make our city safer and improve the quality of life for everyone in this city," President Gray said. "The work of the Task Force will allow us to be more proactive in addressing the social problems that have led individuals to a life of violence. We must utilize all resource available to resolve the criminal justice problems facing our community and encourage citizens to more actively work with our law enforcement officials to keep our streets safe." It is these social problems and strategies for addressing them which are the main work of the Crime Prevention Task Force, and not the law enforcement strategies that are the province of the Criminal Justice Planning Council and other groups.

The Mayor asked the Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee (GIPC) to lead this community effort. GIPC's history as a public-private partnership made it well suited to facilitate the process. Established in 1965 by Mayor John Barton, GIPC has performed the role of a bipartisan alliance of private and public sector citizens to advise past and present Mayors on issues affecting Indianapolis. During GIPC's history, it has provided leadership, expertise, resources and guidance in creating some of the most innovative community responses to challenges faced by Indianapolis residents. In response to this 2006 request, GIPC brought together a diverse group of community, business, and faith leaders to form the Task Force.

On September 7, 2006, the Task Force met with Mayor Peterson, President Gray, and Sheriff Frank Anderson. The group was charged with the task of determining concrete, practical suggestions for crime prevention that could be implemented within a reasonable time frame. To accomplish this goal, the Task Force was divided into eight committees who met during the months of September, October, and November 2006. This committee structure lent itself to making specific recommendations across these eight, relevant

subject areas – best practices, criminal justice, education, employment, health, housing, neighborhoods and family, and youth.

Most of these committees met weekly during the months of September, October, and November 2006. In addition to the committee work, GIPC convened public meetings in October and November 2006 to allow the Task Force members to engage in direct conversation with community residents, youth, service providers, and representatives of faith-based institutions. Task Force members also attended other meetings in the city in order to capture the experience of important constituencies who are involved in or affected by criminal behavior.

To guide the Task Force, the Best Practices Committee provided information and research about best practices in preventing crime with outcomes evidenced within two years of implementation. The general conclusions drawn from the research include the following:

- **The most effective measures are focused on particular populations.** Most violent crimes are perpetrated by a small percentage of the general population. That percentage overwhelmingly is characterized by having previous police records (particularly for violent offenses) and involvement with drugs or alcohol. The key to effective prevention is to identify and work with those most prone to violence. Whether by defining particular groups (e. g., offenders recently released from incarceration, neighborhood gangs, drug offenders), or by places they frequent (e.g., areas of the city with high crime rates), effective strategies focus on particular people.
- **Best practice strategies implemented in concert with one another have greater cumulative effect than piecemeal responses.** Multiple strategies leverage one another's efficacy. For example, an education program for recently released offenders warning them to avoid pathways to recidivism is more effective when combined with drug treatment, job-training and employment programs.
- **Short-term strategies are necessary but will prove insufficient to stem violent crime without tending to the longer-term challenges of crime prevention.** Concentrated police sweeps of high-crime areas may temporarily depress incidents, but the social and economic conditions that breed crime in those areas must be addressed in order for improvements to be sustained.

Taking this research and what it learned from committee meetings and public discussions, the Task Force developed a set of recommendations intended to establish guidelines for future investment in crime prevention activities in Indianapolis. While the set of recommendations produced by each of the committees (with the exception of best practices) focuses on that committee's "sector," many of the recommendations require collaboration across "sectors" in order to focus on particular populations of people most at risk of engaging in criminal activity or finding themselves a victim of it. This collaborative approach requiring cooperation across multiple service delivery systems is necessary to effectively support the populations of people most at risk of being involved in criminal activity.

The Task Force recognizes that meaningful solutions must not only address the short term need to reduce incidents of crime, but also the social and economic conditions that make criminal activity more likely in certain places and by certain people. These recommendations are meant to begin addressing those conditions. The recommendations, which total near 100, range from short term action items to long term recommendations that require further study or planning. Because the recommendations are so voluminous, the Task Force has chosen to present highlighted recommendations that focus on shorter term solutions in and to then attach the Committee reports themselves which contain all recommendations.

The Task Force notes that, while comprehensive, the recommendations are not intended to be exhaustive. Although much research and work was done during this process, much remains to be accomplished. Also, there are many recommendations by the Task Force that include expanding existing programs that are effective or, in fewer cases, beginning new efforts. These interventions require resources. The Task Force has no capacity to identify or generate resources. It must ask the elected leaders and members of the community to decide whether and where to find the necessary resources. The Task Force can only emphasize their vital importance in making the community safer.

# RECOMMENDATION HIGHLIGHTS

## INTRODUCTION

Although the Committee reports are separated into their distinct sectors, there was substantial overlap of topics and recommendations related to those topics. The multidimensional reach of these recommendations is reflected in this section, which highlights several significant recommendations in topic areas rather than committee sectors.

One common theme that touched every Committee was the existence of logistical obstacles that create barriers to individuals who may be at-risk of committing crime. Sometimes little things get in the way of doing big things. For all their good intentions and efforts, at-risk individuals who are walking close to the edge may stumble off the path to self-sufficiency because of matters that are insignificant to someone who already has journeyed successfully into the working world. These include such matters as stable housing; unpaid rent or utilities; child care; child support; lawyer's fees; fees for probation, home detention, ankle bracelets and court-ordered drug or anger-management classes; transportation; lack of a driver's license and reinstatement fees for a suspended driver's license; health or mental health care; tools for a new mechanic or carpenter; and work clothing or uniforms. Underlying and exacerbating the problem is the fact that people often lack the skills and experience to deal with their lack of resources. A lack of knowledge, especially among youth, about existing resources creates further challenges for individuals who might benefit from those programs. Some of these barriers could be quickly eliminated. Others require more in-depth policy or legislative change. For the recommendations to be successfully implemented, these barriers must be addressed.

## EX-OFFENDERS

Over 650,000 individuals – mostly men – are released from penal institutions each year in the United States. At least 4,400 of them will locate in central Indiana.<sup>1</sup> The average recidivism rate for those released from federal penitentiaries is 40 percent; it is 67 percent for those who leave state facilities.<sup>2</sup> And, 75 percent of jail inmates have served prior probation or incarceration sentences.<sup>3</sup> Most incarcerated individuals have very low levels of education and very limited job skills. Only about 59 percent of inmates in state prisons have a high school diploma or its equivalent, compared with 85 percent of the U.S. adult population. And, only about two-thirds of inmates were employed during the month before they were arrested for their first offense.<sup>4</sup>

These individuals return to our communities unprepared for their post-release life. They often lack support and are likely to fail to effectively integrate. In fact, most rearrests occur within six months of release.<sup>5</sup> The community must recognize and address the needs of this population if it truly wants to find ways to prevent crime. Because the issues faced by ex-offenders are multidimensional and so closely connected to crime prevention, several of the Committee reports include recommendations to address these needs. In an effort to explicitly address the challenges faced by individuals re-entering life outside of prison and jail, the Task Force highlights a few representative recommendations.

**Expand Comprehensive Re-entry Preparation Programs:** Because offenders leaving the Criminal Justice System face unique challenges that can hamper transition back into the regular population, it is important that reentry services begin while the offenders are still incarcerated. Case-managed re-entry services may increase the likelihood of securing and maintaining employment post-release. An effort to support ex-offenders as they face life post-release requires coordination across multiple service delivery systems and programs.

In Marion County, the Liberty Hall program provides a local, promising practice for offender re-entry preparation. Designed specifically for the female population, the goal of the Liberty Hall program is to provide a healthy, drug-free, safe, and secure environment within which staff provides treatment services for residents that focus on changing addictive and criminal behaviors. The program provides participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to lead a productive lifestyle prior to reintegration into their communities.

Liberty Hall recognizes the unique treatment and reentry needs of female offenders. Women often confront problems that tend to be unique to their gender, such as sexual abuse, domestic abuse, trauma, and single parenthood. Female offenders are referred by the Marion County Sheriff's Department for inclusion in the program. This gender-specific program incorporates treatment and education that addresses the special challenges and problems that women face, which are addressed through all female case management groups, family services programs, GED/adult education classes, parenting groups, substance abuse classes, religious services, process groups, life skills classes, and connections to community resources such as AA, NA, IHOPE, WorkOne centers, domestic violence providers, and others.

The Task Force recommends continuation and expansion of the program. Also, the feasibility of evaluation and referral of juvenile female offenders ages 16-18 who have dropped out of school or who have a GED who could benefit from the services provided by Liberty Hall should be explored. An employment preparation curriculum and jobs referral program in partnership with the Indianapolis Private Industry Council for female offenders should be added. Post-release supportive services should also be explored.

Finally, the Task Force recommends replicating the Liberty Hall model for adult males. This program would develop a similar curriculum to Liberty Hall that focuses on the particular needs of the male offender population. The Liberty Hall II program should include the critical addition of an intensive employment preparation curriculum based on immediately available jobs for ex-offenders. The employment readiness curriculum should permit work release in the last six to nine months of the offender's sentence to start conditioning the offender to the demands of employment. Like the recommendation for the women's program, Liberty Hall II should provide post-release services such as ongoing job counseling, job skills development, wrap-around services for offenders with addiction and mental health issues, financial counseling, and conflict resolution training so that the offenders are supported consistently once they leave the safe environment created by Liberty Hall II.

The Task Force recognizes the tremendous challenges of locating a suitable facility and finding sufficient funding for this expansion. It recommends that the Criminal Justice Planning Council consider a phased approach to implementation.

**Improve Ex-offenders' Training for and Connections with Sustainable, Legal Work:** Research indicates that securing and maintaining employment post-release reduces recidivism.<sup>6</sup> However, one of the most daunting challenges faced by ex-offenders is the extremely limited employment opportunities available post-release. These opportunities are limited for a variety of reasons. First, ex-offenders often leave prison unprepared to enter the workforce. Prisoners know that having a job will be an important factor in staying out of prison, but few receive job training in prison or have jobs waiting for them post-release. According to a recent study, prisoners who participate in work-release jobs are relatively more successful in securing work after release.<sup>7</sup> Second, for many reasons, nearly 70 percent of private sector businesses refuse to hire ex-felons, regardless of the nature of their crime and its relevance to the business.<sup>8</sup> The challenge to expand workforce development options when employers are reluctant is daunting.

The Task Force has identified several possible ways to overcome these challenges in Marion County. The possibilities outlined here parallel and expand on the workforce development recommendations proposed for youth. Ex-offenders and at-risk youth can benefit equally from expanded workforce opportunities, as highlighted below.

- Expand workforce development offerings for ex-offenders. Although the community is fortunate to have existing workforce development programs that can connect ex-offenders with employment, the supply of these programs is insufficient to meet the need. These intensive training and development programs should include, but not be limited to the following components: (1) assessments of each participant's reading, math and job-related skills; (2) job readiness classes, which would include assistance in how to discuss a participant's previous conviction and incarceration; (3) education preparation; (4) access to offsite skills development programs for careers in high-growth industries such as transportation, distribution and logistics, manufacturing, life sciences and retail and hospitality; (5) development of a job-search plan and job placement facilitated by a team of employment specialists; (6) voucher funds to break down short-term barriers such as transportation, child care, utilities, housing, etc.; (7) life skills training; and (8) onsite mental health assessment and counseling for substance abuse, depression, anger and other mental health issues that affect performance on the job.
- Recruit staff who are diverse in race, gender, and life experience. As a service provider explained, the "University of Adversity," which includes formal education and knowledge of the streets and struggles of those being served, is an important way for staff to connect with clients and make them feel that someone does understand the issues of a troubled past. As service providers have pointed out, it is difficult to find individuals who are uniquely talented and able to work with these clients.
- Establish a centralized team of employment specialists to engage employers who are willing to lead their peers by hiring ex-offenders. Several local service agencies have employment specialists on staff who interact with human resources departments of local businesses. Yet, some of these employers have articulated that interacting with multiple service agencies is inefficient and inconvenient. In response to this, a centralized team of employment specialists in the city – equivalent to job developers at executive search firms – should be formed to cultivate employers who are willing to hire ex-offenders. The team would have a "tool box" of information and assistance available so employers would easily understand what support is available. This tool box would include: (1) information about the federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit, which could reduce an employer's federal income tax liability by as much as \$2,400 for each ex-felon hired; (2) bonding for people with criminal records, available through the federal government and costing \$95 for bonds worth \$5,000 to \$25,000 to protect employers who hire such individuals against financial loss in case of theft, forgery or embezzlement for a six month period; (3) nationally recognized certification to vouch that an individual is prepared for the job; (4) drug screening and criminal background checks; and (5) success stories and other anecdotal information about other employers' experiences hiring these job-seekers.

## THE IVRP AND LEVER PULLING

The Indianapolis Violence Reduction Partnership (IVRP) involves every local, state, and federal criminal justice agency serving Marion County and works with a variety of community partners. IVRP employs a problem-solving approach whereby a homicide or serious violence issue is analyzed, strategies to resolve that problem are implemented and their effects evaluated. The IVRP recognizes that an integrated approach which uses both traditional criminal justice agencies and community collaboration reduces crime.

**Support IVRP's Plan to Host "Lever Pulling" Meetings for Active Probationers:** As part of its work, the IVRP has developed a plan to host "lever pulling" meetings to deter crime. A nationally recognized best practice, "lever pulling" is a focused deterrence strategy that targets specific populations most likely to commit violent and/or criminal acts.<sup>9</sup> The explicit message communicated to these populations is that violent and criminal behavior will no longer be tolerated and that every law enforcement "lever" will be pulled if violence does occur.<sup>10</sup>

The 2007 IVRP lever pulling meetings will focus on active probationers who are normally selected by geographical region. The IVRP will create homicide victim/suspect associate lists, violent crime associate lists, and a VIPER list. These targeted meetings for probationers will clearly articulate and reinforce the message that repeat offenses will be fully prosecuted. The 2007 strategy will also implement probation sweeps, focusing on the same individuals on the Lever Pulling Lists. The Task Force recommends this plan be implemented immediately.

**Expand Lever Pulling Meetings to Gang Members:** Because the Task Force heard repeatedly from the community and its youth that guns are readily available and that gangs are actively recruiting members at area high schools by first gaining their confidence and trust, the Task Force recommends that the IVRP also conduct lever pulling meetings to provide focused warnings to gangs and regular targeted sweeps to incarcerate gang members with illegal firearms and drug possession. Local clergy have indicated access to and an interest in curbing gang violence. Therefore, the Committee recommends that the IVRP establish a special working group with the Concerned Clergy, Ministers on the Move, Interdenominational Minister's Alliance, the local chapter of the Ten Point Coalition, Weed-n-Seed, Westside Community Ministries, Latino faith leaders, and others to host and participate in targeted lever pulling meetings with the gang population at mutually agreed upon locations. Other neighborhood leaders and local clergy should be engaged and actively recruit members of these targeted population for crime prevention services provided by their organizations and other area programs.

# HEALTH

## **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Issues**

The causal relationships between substance abuse, mental illness, and crime are complex but well-known. The relationship between drugs and crime appear to take three forms. First are the crime-facilitating effects of drug use itself – that is, the intoxication and addiction that can encourage reckless and violent behavior. Second are the crimes associated with doing business in an illegal market – violence and the threat of violence necessary to enforce “contracts” in this market. And, third are the crimes committed by users to obtain money to pay for their drugs.<sup>11</sup>

Substance abuse itself – even without the perverse effects of doing business illegally or the economic effects of drug use – can play a significant role in crime. More violent crimes are committed under the influence of alcohol than under the influence of all illegal drugs combined.<sup>12</sup> Relatedly, a comprehensive study of the effectiveness of substance abuse treatment indicates that the more significant reductions in criminal activity – by a wide margin – occur during treatment.<sup>13</sup>

Mental illness and substance abuse are often co-occurring illnesses. Violence can occur when multiple, independent risk factors – including substance abuse, mental illness, family composition, age – intersect. When combined with substance abuse, individuals with a mental illness who are not in treatment are at a high risk for becoming dangerous to themselves and others. Approximately 30 percent of all individuals who are incarcerated suffer from a mental illness/addiction. Without treatment, these individuals are at a high risk for future, repeated crimes and incarceration.<sup>14</sup>

Improving the availability and the quality of substance abuse and mental health treatment represents an important opportunity for intervention. The Task Force offers several immediate interventions in this regard.

**Improve the Courts’ Capacity to Effectively Manage and Direct Individuals with Substance Abuse and Mental Health Issues:** In 1998, a drug diversion program was created in Marion County in which eligible individuals are required to participate in a rehabilitation program and check in with the court every week. If participating individuals complete the one-year program, charges against them are dropped. The data show that this approach has been successful at reducing recidivism. Only 12 percent of those who participated were rearrested as opposed to 44 percent of individuals who did not participate who were rearrested. Although there are currently 200 people in the diversion program in Marion County, there are many more who could benefit from this approach. Unfortunately, less than half of the individuals who face charges in drug courts actually get substance abuse treatment, and juveniles are not served at all. Also, a substantial number of offenders are not screened for mental health issues, so co-occurring issues go undiagnosed and untreated, potentially increasing the likelihood of recidivism.

The Task Force recommends interventions that will have some immediate and meaningful impact on the criminal justice system. First, the Task Force recommends adding two case managers – one assigned to the mental health court and one to the substance abuse court. These case managers should be charged with monitoring offenders and expanding the drug diversion program. Second, the Task Force recommends adding a third court in Marion County to manage and direct individuals with the co-occurring issues of substance abuse and mental health issues. A new case manager would be assigned to this court as well. This court would consult with mental health experts in the provision and recommendations for sentencing based on the needs of the individual. This could include diversion from incarceration into an existing program for treatment of mental health and/or addictions in the community. This collaboration would be crucial to helping the individual stay engaged in treatment. Finally, the Task Force recommends adding a drug



diversion program for juveniles that would allow these youth to stay in school and participate in treatment. A specific program is being explored by the juvenile court.

The Task Force recognizes that the lack of free or low-cost treatment is an obstacle for many who go through the criminal justice system and need substance abuse and/or mental health treatment. The resolution of how to secure and maintain funding is complex and requires further study. In the meantime, there is a need to expand low-cost programs to provide treatment in neighborhoods where drug behavior exists. Examples of current programs include Progress House, Fairbanks, and Seeds of Hope.

**Establish an “Engagement Center” as an Alternative to Jail for Publicly Intoxicated Individuals:** As was articulated in the “Blueprint to End Homelessness,” the Task Force recommends the creation of an “engagement center” similar to those currently operating in Louisville, Oklahoma City, and Columbus, Ohio. The creation of this public shelter would serve to both improve access to substance abuse treatment and to provide a temporary refuge for persons whose intoxicated state makes them inappropriate to be on the street or in another emergency shelter. The engagement center would serve both as a jail diversion program and a gateway to treatment. Since publicly intoxicated persons are currently incarcerated with no direct provision for treatment, this “engagement center” also frees jail space – a commodity whose demand currently exceeds its supply.

**Expand Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) to all Officers and Establish a Specialized CIT Force:** CIT is a program that provides specialized training to police officers to improve their ability to respond to a person with severe mental illness and/or a person who is experiencing a psychiatric crisis. CIT is designed to teach police officers creative ways to defuse rather than escalate intense situations associated with mental illness. The training begins with 40-hours of specialized training for police officers and provides information about severe mental illness as a way to defuse crisis situations. The training provides information about severe mental illnesses and how to respond to persons experiencing a psychiatric crisis in ways that defuse these situations. The training is provided by mental health providers, family advocates and mental health community groups. To date, 500+ officers have been trained, which has greatly improved crisis responses. The Task Force recommends making this training mandatory for all officers.

The CIT model requires a level of system change on the part of both the law enforcement community and the health care delivery system. Continuation of specialized training and development of an even more specialized team would allow the officers to build ongoing relationships with clients within the community they serve. This relationship building can deter or provide early intervention in order to keep clients within the community they live and out of the criminal justice system.

The Task Force recommends that the IMPD enhance and deepen this training to assure that all officers are CIT trained. It also recommends supporting officer training beyond the initial 40 hours in an effort to enhance and deepen their ability to creatively manage crisis situations. Because the training is provided primarily by volunteers, the only cost for this next level of CIT development would include the officer’s time away for ongoing education and development.

## **FAMILIES**

### **Abused and Neglected Children/Family Violence**

The prevention of child abuse and neglect has both short and long term consequences. In Indiana, 21,250 substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect were reported in State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2004.<sup>15</sup> In SFY 2005, 54 children died from abuse or neglect in Indiana. Ten children died in Marion County. These fatalities most often struck the youngest and most vulnerable in the community.<sup>16</sup> The impact on children who suffered and survived abuse and neglect is devastating. Effects range from minor to severe physical injury, chronic low self esteem, aggressive behavior, developmental delays, and problems with bonding and forming relationships.<sup>17</sup>

The negative effects on society are disturbing as well. They include increased risk of low academic achievement, drug use, teen pregnancy, juvenile delinquency and adult criminal behavior.<sup>18</sup> Even witnessing violence puts children at risk for long-term emotional and behavioral problems – including substance abuse, suicide, running away from home, and poverty. Boys are more likely to be aggressive and engage in criminal activity if they grow up experiencing domestic abuse.<sup>19</sup> Violence early in life directly affects a child's brain development – survival skills are developed at the expense of learning and other social skills. Indeed, children who are abused and neglected are almost twice as likely to commit a crime as a juvenile.<sup>20</sup>

To intervene immediately for families at risk and to curb the long term consequences of child abuse and neglect, the Task Force recommends insuring that adequate services and resources exist for families already in contact with the criminal justice or child welfare systems as well as families at risk of entering the system. An example of a program that has been successful in reducing child abuse and neglect is the Neighborhood Alliance for Child Safety (NACS). NACS was first initiated in Indianapolis by Children's Bureau, Inc. in 1999 to provide a variety of support services to families at risk of child abuse and neglect in one zip code (46222). Its mission is "to assure the well being of children and their families by connecting them to appropriate local resources and services." A voluntary program, families are referred to NACS by individuals, local DCS Office, community organizations, schools, police, and through self-referral. Once referred, families work with a NACS Neighborhood Liaison to create family goals and action plans. The Neighborhood Liaison will link families with programs, services, people and activities which will help strengthen families and lower family stress. Services include parent support and education, fun parent night-out events, free home-based counseling, case management services for families on a weekly basis, and crisis emergency assistance as needed. The collaborative involves public and private agencies and institutions as well as families and community representatives.

The program has demonstrated success in reducing the number of less serious cases being substantiated by CPS, increasing neighborhood reporting of suspected abuse, lowering numbers of substantiated neglect cases, and reducing recidivism rates of CPS cases for the 46222 zip code. It has proven so successful that it has been expanded to three other locations and is being used as a model for a state initiative called Community Partners for Child Safety. The Task Force recommends expansion of the program first into other targeted neighborhoods with high rates of child abuse and neglect and eventually countywide.

### **Establish Comprehensive, Multidimensional Programs to Support and Direct Youth "Aging Out" of Foster Care**

Each year, young people in the child welfare system leave the foster care system alone and unprepared to lead independent, self-sufficient lives. Studies indicate that as many as 50 percent of youth leave foster care without a high school diploma or GED. These young people are often underemployed or have earnings

below the poverty rate. Within 12 months of leaving the state's care, 25 percent of youth who turn 18 and, subsequently, "age out" of foster care are arrested or incarcerated. And, one out of five of these youth become homeless within 12 months of leaving the state's care.<sup>21</sup> Although exact data is not available, it has been estimated that 75-100 children "age out" of foster care each year in Marion County.<sup>22</sup>

To improve the community's ability to connect with these youth and help them make healthy choices about their futures, the Task Force recommends implementation of United Way of Central Indiana's "Connected by 25" project. This innovative plan relies upon a coordinated services approach that assists youth ages 14 – 25 to successfully transition from the child welfare system into adulthood. The plan outlines strategies for youth designed to: (1) increase educational attainment; (2) improve access to workforce development opportunities; (3) insure safe, stable and affordable housing; (4) address physical and mental health needs; (5) develop financial literacy and asset management skills; and (6) provide training and opportunities to engage in positive relationships and community activities. It also contains recommendations to encourage collaboration among the child welfare and adult systems to support and implement policies and procedures to help youth make this transition successfully. To implement these strategies, a single community based organization connected with the child welfare and adult systems will act as a single point of entry and be responsible for coordinating all service elements for youth transitioning out of foster care.

## **NEIGHBORHOODS**

### **Continue to Conduct and Support Outreach in Neighborhoods**

Delinquency is primarily a group phenomenon, so the capacity of a community to control group level dynamics is important to a discussion of criminal activity in that community. Most gangs develop from unsupervised, spontaneous gatherings of groups. Subsequently, the ability of communities to provide supervised and more structured activities and interventions has the potential to suppress the formation of gangs.<sup>23</sup> Further, the ability of communities to attract children and youth to these structured activities requires an understanding of what these children and young adults desire and lack.

Currently, several important initiatives exist that aim to reach young people in the neighborhood and deter them from gang activities. These initiatives, often led by faith and civic leaders, must be supported and expanded into areas of high gang activity. Examples of such leadership include the Concerned Clergy, a very active organization that has worked to protect the interest and well-being of youth for decades, and the Indianapolis Ten Point Coalition, which works specifically to address youth violence, improve youth literacy and connect individuals with employment opportunities. Other examples include Save Our Youth, Peace in the Streets, Westside Community Ministries, and others.

The Task Force recommends that neighborhood and faith-based organizations continue to partner with groups in high crime neighborhoods in order to extend their outreach in areas with the highest need. The neighborhood and faith-based organizations should continue to identify those most at risk to provide needed services and refer individuals to other service providers as appropriate.

### **Relationship of Police and Neighborhood Residents**

Most violent crimes take place in neighborhoods where victims of these crimes live with their families and their friends. Although crime is a neighborhood specific problem, it requires the investment of leaders and citizens throughout the entire city to fully and meaningfully address. One tangible way to improve neighborhoods is to assure that law enforcement officers are responsive to neighborhood residents' concerns and calls for help. Residents' respect for police improves when police listen to these citizens – witnesses, victims, and offenders.<sup>24</sup> With the increasing Latino population in Indianapolis, there is also a need for sufficient numbers of officers to be able to communicate and respond to residents' concerns in Spanish, if necessary.

To assure the responsiveness of law enforcement, the Task Force recommends the following:

- Increasing training for police officers regarding how to adequately address citizen complaints and concerns when they are made and increase communication upon resolution of the complaints.
- Establish a system so that citizens calling 911 to report a crime or suspicious activity will be notified of results of police run if they so desire.
- Increase awareness of the process by which residents can report insensitive or unhelpful officers.
- Improving education regarding curfew and enforcement of curfew for youth in cooperation with church community and other community groups.

## **Improve Policing of Public Housing**

The conditions and challenges of poverty can link a person to criminal activity – either in the role of victim or perpetrator – for reasons that are well documented. In Indianapolis, the relationship between crime and the abuse of federally assisted housing programs is notable. Many of those involved in the criminal homicides in 2006 were linked to federally-assisted housing programs. One reason for this is the fraudulent activity that allowed violent criminals to reside with individuals receiving housing subsidies. It is important that these programs have as many safeguard as possible to protect program participants and neighborhoods from fraud and other types of crime.

Between 1996 and 2005, the Indianapolis Housing Agency (IHA) reduced the incidence of fraud and other crimes in public housing properties by 55 percent. IHA attributes this reduction in crime to the presence of uniform housing police officers. In 2005, the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development terminated this program due to federal budget cuts. According to IHA, the problems that had plagued public housing in the past reemerged rapidly. The Task Force recommends securing funding to reinstate and assign uniform housing police officers with jurisdiction over these federally assisted housing programs and properties in Indianapolis. Stabilization of neighborhoods across Indianapolis will be improved by this additional law enforcement presence.

# YOUTH

## MENTORING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people need and desire connections with adults who resolve conflicts peacefully. This need and desire was articulated by youth in Marion County during several meetings and public discussions. A recurring theme from these discussions was a desire to have meaningful relationships with nurturing adults.

Research has shown that youth who lack meaningful relationships with healthy adults and institutions of learning – broadly defined to include families, schools, work, faith-based institutions, and more – are considered to be gravely at risk of becoming involved in violent and criminal behavior.<sup>25</sup> Best practice research also found that mentoring programs often have an immediate and dramatic impact in reducing crime. There is a need to increase the availability of mentoring programs that help young people remain well grounded. The Committee reports contain many recommendations related to mentoring. These recommendations are designed to facilitate meaningful relationships with adults, nurture youth in ways that are likely to build their self-esteem and their ability to resolve conflicts peacefully, and enhance their cognitive abilities in ways that encourage independence throughout their lives. A few of these recommendations are highlighted below.

**Law Enforcement based Mentoring:** Law enforcement mentoring programs are particularly successful because they foster positive relationships with the front line of the criminal justice system, build respect for authority, offer opportunities to engage in collaborative activities, and provide a framework for nonviolent conflict resolution. Several committees identified existing law enforcement mentoring programs in Marion County that should be sustained and enhanced.

The Our Kids program, also known as the “OK program,” was founded in 1990 in California at the height of gang violence in that community. Under the guidance of an African American police officer, the program organizes responsible African American adult males to serve as positive role models and mentors for their younger counterparts. These volunteers are called “teammates” and serve as role models and mentors for two to four young men each. The Indianapolis chapter is coordinated by three Indianapolis police officers who have offices in the three participating IPS schools. Enrollment is voluntary, and there must be an agreement between the student, his parents, and the OK program showing support of all.

While the OK program has shown good promise, sustainability is a challenge. The program currently relies primarily on public funding as well as the assignment of officers by the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD). In order to continue and to grow the program, additional resources are necessary. Also, the Task Force recognizes that the growth of this program presents challenges for the IMPD in terms of the availability of officers, especially African American officers.

The Task Force recommends that the City support an effort to expand the OK program through several strategies. First, it will be necessary to have the continuing support of the IMPD for the assignment of officers to coordinate the program. The OK programs should be expanded in phases as resources are available to more schools – something that would require an increasing commitment for police participation. A correlated goal would be to work with the Hispanic community to encourage support for an OK program for Latino youth. Second, it will be important to seek private funding from a broad range of private sources such as public spirited citizens, foundations, sports franchises, and entrepreneurial activities of the OK program itself. Third, the Task Force recommends that the City transfer some abandoned properties under its control to the OK program with the understanding that the rehabilitation of the properties would be a project for OK participants. As properties are rehabilitated, thus stabilizing neighborhoods, the properties could be sold in the private market to obtain funds to support or endow the activities of the OK Program.

Another example includes the Police Athletic League or “PAL Club,” which connects at-risk youth ages 6 to 12 with educational, cultural, and fitness activities that are designed to enhance self-esteem, reduce crime, and promote a positive relationship with police. The Task Force recommends that the program be maintained in the existing locations where it is already having a proven measurable impact on youth. The non-covered areas in the new IMPD service area should also be evaluated. Also, the scope of the core program should be expanded immediately to provide a sports, mentoring, and tutoring program for youth ages 13-18 that is essentially the same as those for the younger youth. Specific, culturally competent programming should be implemented for the immigrant population with expansion of the program to offer additional sports such as soccer and tennis. Bilingual officers and bilingual volunteer staff should be recruited as well. In addition, the entire program should be expanded to include mandatory conflict resolution training in general and in the context of organized sports. Also, because exposure to the arts has been proven to reduce crime, theater or creative arts focused on conflict resolution should be added as a mandatory and complimentary component of the tutoring and mentoring programs.

The Task Force recognizes that maintaining and increasing staffing levels is a challenge given retirement and other staff needs. Also, there is a need to increase the number of Spanish-speaking officers to increase involvement of Hispanic youth. Retired police officers and sheriff deputies should be recruited to volunteer to reduce the cost of adding additional officers to staff the program until additional funding sources can be determined for long term expansion of the program to cover the new IMPD service area.

Finally, the Task Force recommends continuation of the G.R.E.A.T. program, which is a school based, uniformed officer instructed, classroom mentoring curriculum funded by the Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Assistance. Its primary objective is prevention of delinquency, violence, and gang membership. G.R.E.A.T. lessons focus on providing life skills to students to help them avoid delinquent behavior and violence to solve problems. The Task Force recommends expansion of this program in the township schools located in the IMPD service area. The Task Force cautions that expansion of the program should be implemented in phases and in such a way as to not place additional financial or staff burdens on IMPD.

**Coordination of Mentoring Programs for Youth:** As the Committee reports reflect, many valuable mentoring programs already exist in Indianapolis such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, 100 Black Men, My Brother’s Keeper, Project IMPACT, AIM, and other programs. The Task Force recommends a strategy designed to increase the connection of specialized mentoring programs to youth most at-risk of becoming involved in criminal or violent behavior. There is a need to connect youth at the Juvenile Detention Center with mentors and mentoring programs that meet the individual child’s needs. The Task Force recommends the creation of a position of “mentoring coordinator” at the center who could match youth at the center with appropriate mentors and mentoring programs. This coordinator would also work with existing programs and identify additional mentoring programs that would be helpful to youth at the center.

## EDUCATION/RELATIONSHIP TO SCHOOL

A young person's relationship to school can significantly impact his involvement in crime. Research indicates that early academic failure, weak attachment to school, poor school attendance, and a poor school environment (i.e., one that is characterized by disorder in the school and in classrooms and the availability of drugs, alcohol, and weapons, for instance) are risk factors for violent crime.<sup>26</sup> Conversely, protections against involvement in violent crime include a positive school environment (i.e., a school that teaches responsibility and moral character, encourages a sense of community, establishes clear rules, and practices teaching methods that promote the development of cognitive thinking), academic success, reading by third grade, motivation to learn, involvement in school activities, and graduation.<sup>27</sup>

The Committees developed many recommendations designed to increase educational attainment and improve school environment that have both short and long term implications. The Task Force understands that there is already much for schools to tackle regarding their campus safety and security and that schools are hampered by a lack of funding, a need to focus on the Indiana standards, lack of parental involvement, among other things. The degree to which Marion County schools already do the work highlighted in these recommendations or are able in the short term to implement these recommendations must be determined. Among the Committees' recommendations are four that are highlighted below.

**Schools as Safe Places:** Not surprisingly, Task Force members heard from some students that they do not feel safe at school as a result of weapons in schools, gang recruiting, and bullying. Students also reported that they desire school uniforms to diminish bullying based on clothing, especially in the middle school grades. To insure schools are safe places, the Task Force recommends the following:

- Rigorously screen for weapons throughout the school year and increase the number of routine screenings;
- Implement and enforce school uniforms;
- Insure all classroom settings can be easily monitored (i.e., eliminate supervision and security blind spots where youth report undesirable behavior happens); and
- In conjunction with the Indiana Department of Education's Safety Specialist Academy, support an assessment guide and process for schools related to violence prevention practice and identify Marion County schools that require additional violence prevention supports.

While not exhaustive, these measures would reduce the likelihood of violence on school grounds.

**Encourage and Support Schools to Teach Peaceful Conflict Resolution, Violence Prevention, Anti-bullying, and Life Skills:** Efforts to redefine norms of behavior that include peace and mutual respect have been effective in preventing violent crime. Communication and reinforcement of these clear, consistent norms can, in fact, improve a school's environment and reduce the likelihood of violence.<sup>28</sup> During meetings with faith leaders, youth, and members of the public, Task Force members heard repeatedly that young people and their families lack skills to resolve conflicts peacefully and without aggression. Families who lack conflict resolution skills are unable to teach their children alternative ways of resolving conflict and other positive social norms. With the widespread availability of guns, this lack of skill has deadly consequences. Rather than resolving differences through dialogue or other nonviolent means, one angry party simply ends the dispute by pulling a weapon and firing in the heat of the moment, often in front of impressionable children. During a visit with incarcerated youth at the Marion County Juvenile Detention Center, one young man under age 16 relayed to Task Force members that if he felt disrespected by someone because of an argument or because he simply heard that a person said negative things about him when he arrived at school on any given morning, he could leave school promptly at 2:50 p.m., obtain a gun within a few hours, and kill the person who disrespected him before 9 p.m.



Conflict resolution programs exist but do not reach enough young people in our community at critical times in their lives. The Peace Learning Center is a local “best practice” in that regard and has demonstrated the effectiveness of teaching young adults and at-risk youth creative ways of resolving conflicts, personal responsibility, and character building. Its programs currently reach approximately 10,000 youth, parents and school staff annually. To date, most of the youth served are elementary school students. Because older students also require age-appropriate reinforcement of conflict resolution skills learned as younger children, there is a need to expand programming to serve more middle and high school students. Programming should also include workshops for teachers, parents, school staff, and others who deal with youth to help them build core conflict resolution skills they can use and model working with youth and their peers. The Task Force recommends a phased expansion of programs into additional middle and high schools. It also recommends that a conflict resolution program be reinstituted at the Marion County Juvenile Detention Center to target incarcerated youth and youth on probation.

Conflict resolution must also include teaching young people about healthy relationships as a means to prevent domestic abuse. Relationship violence is consistently reported as having a negative impact on children's future behaviors and their emotional well-being. Current research indicates domestic abuse may be the single major precursor to child abuse and neglect.<sup>29</sup> An estimated one-third of the nation's teenagers are abused emotionally, physically, or sexually by their partners.<sup>30</sup> Prevention and intervention is crucial to break the intergenerational cycle of abuse.

One method for preventing domestic abuse is through school-based prevention programs aimed at pre-teens and adolescents as they begin to explore new connections with their peers. For example, the Julian Center offers a school-based prevention program, Relationship Violence/Relationship Respect, which helps to raise awareness about relationship violence before it becomes a commonplace part of their experience. The Task Force recommends that these programs be expanded to all Marion County middle and high schools.

**Early, Ongoing Assessments and Interventions to Improve Students’ Reading Abilities:** One of the most critical variables influencing a student’s ongoing attachment to school and learning is their ability to read by the third grade.<sup>31</sup> Early interventions to promote academic success and literacy are important to a crime prevention effort because a young person’s attachment to school and learning can mitigate the likelihood of their being involved in crime later in life.

The Task Force recommends actively supporting pre-literacy efforts and evaluating their efficacy. One important collaborative program to highlight is Success by 6. This program – a collaborative initiative led by the United Way of Central Indiana, the City of Indianapolis, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation – focuses on children from birth to six years old and their emotional, social, lingual, cognitive, and physical welfare in preparation for school. Success by 6 currently has several elements. Imagination Library is designed to improve early literacy by providing children under age five with a free book each month to be read by parents or caregivers. The Born Learning Campaign improves communication between parents and children by providing materials to help parents turn everyday moments into teachable moments. The initiative is also focused on high impact projects that support child care providers dedicated to providing high quality early childhood experiences. It is also working to build relationships between schools, parents, and providers to support the child’s transition into kindergarten.

**Establish Alternatives to Suspension, and Expulsion Through in-School Suspension:** Decisions made and actions taken – whether by students, their parents, or schools – that result in a student’s disconnection to school generally serve to undermine efforts to prevent crime.<sup>32</sup> In Marion County, a variety of alternatives exist for drop-outs, students at risk for suspension and expulsion, students interested in trades or technical training, GED attainment, and students generally in need of alternative educational settings. Yet, these drop-

out recovery and alternative educational opportunities are not available through all school districts. The Education Committee report recommends several alternatives that should be well established throughout all school districts in the county.

One recommendation made by the Committee that was echoed many times, especially by youth, was the need for in-school suspensions. During meetings with youth, Task Force members heard comments such as “If you get in a fight, you get suspended. You can’t learn because you are at home. When kids fight, they get kicked out of school, which is what they want. They should get in-school suspensions.” These sentiments are reinforced by research, which shows that out-of-school suspension and expulsion does not improve the overall level of student behavior or school safety.<sup>33</sup>

The Task Force recommends that Marion County school districts enact in-school suspension policies that would require students to be in school as a consequence for inappropriate behavior. Options such as extended days, additional classroom assignments, community service at the school, counseling, and other activities should be considered. Although the Task Force recognizes the additional costs associated with supervising these students, it believes that the costs are justified if suspensions drop, students’ behavior improves, and students are more likely to finish high school.

## ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY

### **Connect Older Youth and Teens with Community Centers, Multi-service centers, Faith-based Organizations and Nonprofits that Offer Recreation, Tutoring, Life Skills Coaching, and Employment Skills Development:**

Professionally organized after-school programs, coordinated athletic opportunities, and extracurricular activities can prevent crime. In fact, an analysis of crime patterns indicates that the four hours immediately after school – and only on school days – are a period of heightened juvenile violent crime.<sup>34</sup> The public forums and meetings with youth revealed that Marion County youth lack access to positive out-of-school time opportunities for a variety of reasons: lack of knowledge about available programs, requirements to work to meet basic needs, lack of transportation, lack of recreational opportunities and places of interest to them, inability to pay sports or club fees, lack of intramural sports programs, etc.

The community needs to discover creative ways to engage youth during these after-school hours. The opportunity to meaningfully connect with youth is enhanced when healthy adults interact with them in multiple aspects of their lives. To support healthy family relationships, non-profit agencies, community centers, faith-based organizations, and multi-service centers offer programs that can be expanded and improved to connect with high school teens in multiple ways.

To increase engagement opportunities, the Task Force recommends supporting the work of community centers, faith-based groups, and multi-service centers by providing adequate funding opportunities specifically for a range of youth programming and provision of adequate staff. To reach at-risk youth and teens, it will be critical to develop more effective ways to communicate with youth to increase their awareness of and interest in these neighborhood-based centers – including improving outreach to “tougher” youth who are not connected to program opportunities. The Task Force also recommends expansion and promotion of intramural sports and recreation leagues supported by Indy Parks. Finally, youth-serving agencies and faith-based organizations should create and support programs identified by youth themselves as being activities of interest with support from nonprofit organizations.

**Connect Youth with the Arts:** Connecting youth with opportunities to congregate in positive ways and offering them positive ways to express themselves has great value – both in terms of the types of decisions these young people make about their own lives and in terms of the impact these decisions have on the communities with which these young people are connected.

Locally, several arts and mentoring organizations offer arts programming as a means to reach young people. For example, the Asante Children’s Theatre (ACT) is a local, African-American culture based outlet of creative expression for talented youth. ACT pieces are designed to portray positive youth experiences. And, the work itself is designed to help youth see theatre as offering career potential in many fields. Young Audiences of Indiana has multi-faceted programming to reach youth in schools, after-school, and in the juvenile justice system. These types of programs should be expanded. The Task Force also recommends that the PAL Club, discussed earlier, use theater or creative arts focused on conflict resolution as part of its method for reaching young people.

The Task Force also recommends the creation of a new program based on a national promising practice for reducing school violence. Urban Improv is an interactive program that uses improvisational theatre workshops to teach violence prevention, conflict resolution, decision making, and impulse control. This national program uses an innovative curriculum that helps students deal creatively with major issues in their lives.

**Marketing of Youth Programs and Activities with Impact, Influence and Effect:** Indianapolis has many valuable services and activities available to youth and families in the community. While numerous

families take advantage of these programs, many more are unaware these opportunities exist, especially families most in need of services. Task Force members heard repeatedly that young people “don’t have anything to do” and families “don’t know where to turn for information.” Traditional methods of communication do not seem to penetrate the desired target audience and often fail to reach into the community, especially high crime neighborhoods and at-risk youth.

To improve access to existing services and activities, the Task Force recommends a concerted effort to strengthen public youth activity marketing and public relations. This recommendation requires development and support of a multi-lingual city-wide marketing campaign that has a single point of contact. This contact would manage a network of media outlets (i.e., public television, newspapers, radio, and other newer forms of media) and weekly highlights of youth activities and opportunities available throughout Indianapolis. The campaign would also partner with MCCOY to annually distribute a comprehensive youth activity booklet that is also made available on-line. MCCOY currently distributes the MCCOY Youth Activity Directory that could be made more widely available. Finally, the campaign would develop and support a youth activity website that is created and maintained by youth. Young people have the best insight on what would appeal to other youth and should, therefore, be involved in all aspects of the campaign.

**Expand Employment Opportunities for At-Risk Youth:** During this process, youth repeatedly indicated they have difficulty securing work. Youth at the Juvenile Detention Center said that they would be willing to participate in job training programs if they know they will be employed as a result of that participation. Teachers and school social workers indicated that students appear more interested in school when they recognize the connection between school, work, and future quality of life.

In studying the issue of employment and youth, committees found that those with the greatest needs and most risk for engaging in criminal activity are youth and young adults aged 16-25, called “at-risk youth.” The following highlighted recommendations are designed to help this group see the merit of living law-abiding lives and achieving self-sufficiency through employment:

- Expand workforce development offerings for at-risk individuals in neighborhoods. Existing workforce development programs are insufficient to meet the need. Organizations must be readily available to help at-risk young people who have not committed a crime to develop skills to become self-sufficient. These intensive training and development programs should include, but not be limited to the following components: (1) assessments of each participant’s reading, math and job-related skills; (2) job readiness classes; (3) education preparation; (4) access to offsite skills development programs for careers in high-growth industries such as transportation, distribution and logistics, manufacturing, life sciences and retail and hospitality; (5) development of a job-search plan and job placement facilitated by a team of employment specialists; (6) voucher funds to break down short-term barriers such as transportation, child care, utilities, housing, etc.; (7) life skills training; and (8) onsite mental health assessment and counseling for substance abuse, depression, anger and other mental health issues that affect performance on the job.
- Recruit and equip staff who are diverse in race, gender, and life experience. There is a critical need for staff who can relate to clients’ challenges. As a service provider explained, the “University of Adversity,” which includes formal education and knowledge of the streets and struggles of those being served, is an important way for staff to connect with clients and make them feel that someone does understand the issues of a troubled past. As service providers have pointed out, it is difficult to find individuals who are uniquely talented and able to work with these clients.
- Establish a centralized team of employment specialists to engage employers who are willing to lead their peers by hiring at-risk youth. Several local service agencies have employment specialists on staff

who interact with human resources departments of local businesses. Yet, some of these employers have articulated that interacting with multiple service agencies is inefficient and inconvenient. In response to this, a centralized team of employment specialists in the city – equivalent to job developers at executive search firms – should be formed to cultivate employers. The team would have a “tool box” of information and assistance available so employers would easily understand what support is available. This tool box would include: (1) information about the federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit, which could reduce an employer’s federal income tax liability by as much as \$2,400 for each high-risk youth hired; (2) nationally recognized certification to vouch that an at-risk individual is prepared for the job; (3) drug screening and criminal background checks; and (4) success stories and other anecdotal information about other employers’ experiences hiring these job-seekers.

- Create “Jump Start,” a new program designed to provide a financial incentive for employers to consider and hire at-risk young people by paying the wages of an individual during an internship or by paying half the wages of an at-risk young person during his first five weeks of “permanent” employment. The employer could also arrange job shadowing for an at-risk youth so that he and a potential employer have the opportunity to learn more about each other.
- Create a project to recruit, train, and deploy individuals who will commit to establishing a long-term mentoring relationship with at-risk individuals engaged in programs and early employment.
- Develop and support collaborations that positively engage at-risk youth in programs to develop academic, social, life, and job training skills. Partnerships between business community, schools, etc. to introduce at-risk youth to career paths and employment opportunities should be cultivated and expanded. These partnerships would focus on connecting schools with relevant careers and encourage schools to secure the participation of professionals that youth respect and to whom they can relate in order to strengthen programs that prepare youth for employment.
- Expand programs such as the Fathers and Families Center, which assists low income young fathers and expectant fathers, up to age 27, unemployed or under-employed, in need of help in the areas of education, parenting, paternity and child support, employment preparation and placement, and other support services such as housing, transportation, legal and medical assistance, food, and clothing. Fathers and Families Center's services are also extended to the families of these young men. More than 1,800 individuals have completed the program’s intensive curriculum.

## CONCLUSION

The Community Crime Prevention Task Force understood its charge from Mayor Peterson and Council President Gray as a request to identify interventions that have the potential to reduce violent and criminal activity in our city in the short term. Our primary response is one that focuses on the people most at risk of committing crimes as well as the neighborhoods that are currently high crime areas. Our secondary response is one that identifies approaches that not only temporarily reduce incidents, but also address the longer term social, economic, and cultural conditions that make criminal activity more likely to occur.

The recommendations we offer here require at least two community-wide commitments. First is a community-wide commitment to continue the conversation, planning, coordination, and implementation of crime prevention strategies and initiatives. The second is a commitment to generate public and private funding to support the programs and projects outlined in our recommendations. This will require a partnership between public and private entities. Without these commitments, our work is merely an academic exercise. The Task Force, therefore, recommends that the City designate an individual or organization to be responsible for continuing and coordinating future work in this area.

We view our work here as a first step – initiating a community-wide conversation and generating a set of recommendations that come from diverse sectors of our community and that may be evaluated and built upon in order to create a sustainable strategy for investment. That strategy is clear: we must invest to end violence in our community.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>6</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>7</sup> Urban Institute. 2006. *Understanding the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry: Research Finding from the Urban Institute's Prisoner Reentry Portfolio*. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute.
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- <sup>10</sup> Cook, Philip J., Mark H. Moore, and Anthony A. Braga. 2004. In James Q. Wilson and Joan Petersilia, eds. *Crime: Public Policies for Crime Control*. Oakland, CA: ICS Press.
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- <sup>19</sup> McCloskey, L.A. and M. Walker. 2000.
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- <sup>21</sup> Lynda Dunne. 2004. "Effective Approaches to Supporting Youth Aging Out of Foster Care: A Review of Research that is Currently Underway." Washington, D.C.: Voices for America's Children.
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- <sup>23</sup> Sampson, Robert J. 2004. In James Q. Wilson and Joan Petersilia, eds. *Crime: Public Policies for Crime Control*. Oakland, CA: ICS Press.
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<sup>25</sup> Wilson, J. and J. Howell. 1994. *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*. 45:3-14.

<sup>26</sup> Summarized from:

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b – Sherman et al., 1998.

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